JACOB COHEN
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MONTCLAIR, N. J.

July 18, 1966

Dear Mrs. Meagher:

I greatly appreciate your informative and cogent letter. I know your work, of course, and have come to admire it as must anyone working around the assassination.

Permit me some comment on the issues raised in your letter: I am perfectly aware of the problems raised by the shirt and jacket. After a year of shooting ~~xx~~ myself in the back and waving to imaginary crowds, I have been successful, only a few times, in moving both jacket and shirt the required three inches. (Epstein's claim that there is a discrepancy of six inches I find incomprehensible. The wound indicated in Exhibit 386 is more than two inches below the top of the shirt and jacket.) Agreed, it is hard to move the clot ing the required distance upward and to the right, but since it's possible, it seems to me fruitless to concentrate fire on the shirt and jacket when there is other, less easily evaded, far more decisive, evidence extant.

As for the stretcher bullet. It certainly presents difficulties for any defender of the Warren Report. Great difficulties. Not on the grounds of its weight, by the way, pace Salandria. Frazier says, accurately, that bullets of this type vary in pristine weight from 161 to 164 grams. If 399 was 164 or 163 grams in pristine form, Salandria's argument about its weight is pointless. The shape of 399 presents a more difficult problem, one I haven't solved. And I promise you that when and if I think I've solved it, I'll test my solution against your less gullible intelligence.

The eyewitness testimony on the nature of the wounds is contradictory. I find Kellerman's verbal identification of the back wound in perfect conformity with the wound depicted in Exhibit 386. Furthermore, one must include Humes, Boswell, and Finck among the eyewitnesses to the wounds. And there are, I might add, three morticians who prepared the President's body for burial, all of whom observed his wounds the night of the assassination, whose unplumbed testimony I shall include in my book. I'll stand on the statement in my article.

As for the date the FBI got the autopsy: why are you "astonished" that Adams disclaimed the state ents attributed to him by Epstein? You yourself seem to accept Knebel's date, December 23, 1963. But Epstein said the FBI had the autopsy before December 9. He also said they had the photos. Unless you can offer evidence establishing the accuracy

of these statements your astonishment is misplaced. Better that you were astonished that a young scholar should base such pivotal assertions on such flimsy evidence. I am, by the way, skeptical about the December 23rd date. The Treasury Department has fibbed to me several times and may be fibbing to Knebel as well. But certainly I'll agree to this: if the FBI had the autopsy by the 23rd, and if the authors of the Supplementary Report had studied it (rather than used the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ reports on which they based the~~xx~~ December 9th Report), you're in business.

All of which gets me back to the main point of my article, which I think you've missed. My aim was not to develop all the evidence potentially embarrassing to the Com ission. That's been done over and again. My aim was to organize a campaign, to devise a plan of action. It seems to me that the wisest strategy is to concentrate on the missing evidence not the existing evidence, since official "spo kesmen" have evaded comment on the contradictions in the existing evidence for over a year, and will, no doubt, do so forever. There is no longer a Warren Commission, Mrs. Meagher, and your appeals to and complaints about "official spokesmen for the Warren Commission" will ~~fxxxxxxxx~~ not even fall on deaf ears. Do you actually expect that that Com ission will reconstitute itself in order to withstand your very cogent abuse and that of the other critics? Nor has the FBI shown any propensity to admitting its own errors in public. You may get a few articles published by complaining to the high heavens, and some propaganda value, but nothing will happen in consequence of such efforts. My own idea is to concentrate on the missing documents, hint at suppression, and innocently demand that they be made available in the name of Truth. Furthermore, I can talk to something realer than the high heavens: David Acheson, Robert Kennedy, Admiral Burkley. (I believe Acheson is warming to the idea of a Committee to examine the photos and X-rays and I hope to see Kennedy shortly.)

Yes, of course, there are ~~xxxxxx~~problems in the evidence apart from the photos and X-rays, though most of these, I believe, could be resolved once we get the autopsy straight. I don't know what you think of Salandria's opinion that assassins fired at and hit the President from the front and the right side. (Though the implicit autopsy in the FBI Report ~~xx~~ contains no mention of these hits.) But certainly if there were ~~sxuch~~ s shots and hits the X-rays and photos would ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ show it and they would settle the question of where, precisely, Kennedy was hit in the back. Nor is it as easy to forge photographs as you imply. And it is impossible to forge X-rays.

So can I persuade you to join a "united front" of students of the Report- critics and defenders alike-- all of whom have an interest that these documents be made public. By concentrating on that single issue--and concentrating fire on a few single individuals and agencies, we may achieve a breakthrough. I assume that you wish a breakthrough.

I'll be most eager to see your book. I've just finished Mark Lanes's ~~book~~; he gave me the proofs; and we need another one. I hope you include your own hypothesis on the number ~~of~~ ~~and~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~of~~

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of shots and hits and the location of the assassin or assassins. I think you will agree that the critics of the Report ought to subject themselves to the same requirements of internal consistency which they demand of the Report itself. One of the reasons I continue to defend the Commission is that I find the implied theories of the critics absurd and contradictory. If Epstein, for example, believes that the autopsy summarized in the FBI Report is correct, then he has a version of the assassination in which a bullet travelling 2500 feet per second enters the President's back only an inch and dislodges. He also must have the President clutch his throat four seconds before he's wounded there. Salandria and Lane are a mass of contradictions; Salandria particularly. So I hope you will adumbrate a theory which is worthy of your negative criticism.

I am at the above address four days a week and would like to see you and talk to you some time.

Very Truly Yours,

Jacob Cohen

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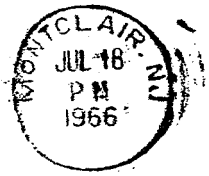

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